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UNITED NATIONS

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CEDAW/C/1996/L.1
19 January 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHÖPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

II. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS

A. States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. On 2 February 1996, the closing date of the fifteenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there were 150 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979, and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York in March 1980. In accordance with article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex I to the present report.

B. Opening of the session

3. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its fifteenth session at United Nations Headquarters from 15 January to 2 February 1996. The Committee held ... plenary meetings (.....) and its two working groups each held ... meetings.

4. The session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Ivanka Corti (Italy), who had been elected at the fourteenth session of the Committee, in January 1995.

5. In his opening statement, made on behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, Mr. Nitin Desai, stressed that the views of the members of the Committee as members of the United Nations treaty body most directly concerned with the status of women would be extremely valuable in follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

6. He recalled that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Conference reaffirmed the fundamental principle set forth in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. As an agenda for action, the Platform for Action sought to promote and protect the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of women throughout their life cycles.

7. He drew attention to four recommendations of the Platform for Action which were made on the work of the Committee. The Conference urged the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women and set a goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by the year 2000. It also urged all Governments to limit the extent of reservations that are contrary to the object and purpose of the Convention or which are otherwise incompatible with international treaty law. It recommended that gender aspects be included in reporting on all human rights conventions and instruments, including Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), to ensure analysis and review of the human rights of women. The Conference also stressed that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in implementing its responsibilities under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, should, within its mandate, take into account the Platform for Action when considering the reports submitted by States parties.

8. The Under-Secretary-General suggested that the guidelines for presentation of reports under article 18 of the Convention could be a useful tool for encouraging States parties to identify elements of their implementation of the Convention that they also saw as serving as follow-up to the Platform for Action.

9. He informed the Committee that the Secretary-General had appointed Ms. Rosario Green to act as his advisor on gender issues and help ensure system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action, in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, in keeping with a recommendation of the Fourth World Conference on Women. She also assists the Secretary-General in assuring that a gender prospect is integrated into policies and programmes in all areas of the system and is fully taken into account in furthering the organization's linkages with civil society. Ms. Green will draw upon the expertise and assistance of all existing entities working in this area, including the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the focal point on women in the Department of Administration and Management and all other entities in the United Nations system.

10. The Under-Secretary-General noted that the increase in ratification or acceptance of the Convention, with the accession of Liechtenstein in December 1995, signalled more work for the Committee.

11. In this connection, he referred to General Assembly resolution 49/164 of 23 December 1994, in which the Assembly requested States parties to meet to consider the question of amending article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention to provide for adequate meeting time for the Committee. He informed the Committee that subsequent to the States parties meeting held on 22 May 1995, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/202 of 22 December 1995, in which the Assembly urged States parties to take appropriate measures so that acceptance by a two-thirds majority of States parties can be achieved as soon as possible in order for the amendment to enter into force.

12. The Under-Secretary-General drew to the Committee's attention the Secretariat's report on ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1996/6), in which it was proposed to adopt the practice of other human rights treaty bodies of preparing a concise report emphasizing concluding comments on States parties reports while retaining summary records to reflect the constructive dialogue.

13. The Under-Secretary-General informed the Committee that based on the Committee's suggestion No. 7, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 1995/29 of 24 July 1995, entitled "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to invite Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations to submit their views on an optional protocol to the Convention, including those related to feasibility, taking into account the elements suggested by the Committee at its fourteenth session. In response to that request, a note verbale was sent by the Secretary-General to all Governments informing them of the decision of the General Assembly. Replies are being received and the Commission on the Status of Women, which will meet from 11 to 22 March, will begin work on the protocol.

14. Also addressing the Committee, the Assistant Secretary-General and Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, Rosario Green, said she was honoured to be coordinating the United Nations system-wide follow up to the World Conference on Women, and hoped that, in fulfilling her tasks, she could count on the experts in the Committee for their assistance.

C. Attendance

15. All members of the Committee attended the fifteenth session, with the exception of ..... . However, Ms. Tendai Ruth Bare attended from ... to ...; Ms. Aurora Javate de Dios from ... to ...; Ms. Sunaryati Hartono from ... to ...; Ms. Salma Khan from ... to...; Ms. Elsa V. Muñoz-Gómez from ... to

...; Ms. Ginko Sato from ... to ...; Ms. Lin Shangzhen from ... to ...; and Ms. Mervat Tallawy from ... to ... . For the membership of the Committee, see annex II.

D. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

16. The Committee considered the provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/1996/1) at its 285th meeting, on 15 January 1996. The agenda as adopted was as follows:

1. Opening of the session.

2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

3. Report of the Chairperson on the activities undertaken between the fourteenth and the fifteenth sessions of the Committee and consideration of the report of the sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and action taken by the General Assembly concerning treaty bodies.

4. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

5. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

7. Results of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

8. Provisional agenda for the sixteenth session.

9. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifteenth session.

E. Report of the pre-session working group

17. The Committee had decided at its ninth session 1/ to convene a pre-session working group for five days before each session to prepare lists of questions relating to the second and subsequent periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at the session. The Committee, wishing to reflect the ideas and views of its various members, decided that it should continue to submit to the Secretariat draft questions on specific countries and articles of the Convention prior to the meeting of the working group. In accordance with the decision of the Committee at its thirteenth session, the pre-session working group met at United Nations Headquarters. Owing to the weather conditions, the pre-session working group met from 8 to 12 January 1996.

18. In accordance with the provisional agenda of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1996/1), the working group prepared a list of questions for four countries: Belgium, Cuba, Hungary and Ukraine.

19. The Committee had originally proposed that five members should be part of the pre-session working group. As there is currently no member in the Committee from eastern Europe, and owing to illness of two of the designated members, the working group consisted initially of only two designated members, who were later joined by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Ivanka Corti. The members of the pre-session working group were Ivanka Corti, Carmel Shalev (Chairperson) and Kongit Sinegiorgis.

20. At the ... meeting, on ... January 1996, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group introduced the report of the working group (CEDAW/C/1996/CRP.1). Members adopted the report containing the list of questions, which was sent to the State parties concerned.

F. Composition and organization of work of the working groups

21. At its 286th meeting, on 15 January 1996, the Committee agreed on the composition of its two standing working groups: Working Group I to consider ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee and Working Group II to consider ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention.

22. Working Group I was composed of the following members of the Committee: Desiree Patricia Bernard, Carlota Bustelo García del Real, Ivanka Corti, Liliana Gurdulich de Correa, Salma Khan, Lin Shangzhen, Elsa Victoria Muñoz-Gómez, Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling, Kongit Sinegiorgis, Mervat Tallawy, Charlotte Abaka, Gül Aykor, Miriam Yolanda Estrada Castillo.

23. Working Group II was composed of the following members of the Committee: Charlotte Abaka, Emna Aouij, Tendai Ruth Bare, Carlota Bustelo García del Real, Silvia Rose Cartwright, Aurora Javate de Dios, Miriam Yolanda Estrada Castillo, Evangelina García-Prince, Sunaryati Hartono, Salma Khan, Pirkko Anneli Mäkinen, Ahoua Ouedgraogo, Ginko Sato, Carmel Shalev, Lin Shangzhen, Kongit Sinegiorgis, Mervat Tallawy.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38 and corrigendum (A/45/38 and Corr.1), paras. 28-31.

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Addendum

III. REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. At the 285th meeting, the Chairperson of the Committee, in her introductory statement, said that 1995 had been a particularly important year in the history of the Committee. The number of ratifications of the Convention had increased from 136 to 150. In April 1995, the Committee had held a one-week meeting at Madrid, hosted by the Government of Spain. That was the first time that the Committee had held an extraordinary meeting supported financially by a Government. The members of the Committee also attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

2. The Chairperson outlined the meetings attended by the Chairperson and other members of the Committee. She informed the Committee about the sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies. She noted that paragraph 20 of the report of that meeting (A/50/505) highlighted the importance of the human rights treaty bodies for the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and also recommended that each treaty body, in its examination of reports of States parties, investigate their compliance with obligations relating to education and public information on human rights.

3. The Chairperson indicated that the sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies had reiterated the importance of collaboration with non-governmental organizations. In 1995 she had suggested ways and means of strengthening links between the Committee and non-governmental organizations so that they could assist in lobbying for ratification and implementation of the Convention and provide "shadow" reports on a regular basis. The Committee should consider organizing exchanges of views with non-governmental organizations.

4. With reference to paragraph 22 of the above-mentioned report, the Chairperson said that she had raised the issue of the role of treaty bodies in preparation for world conferences in the hope of avoiding in future the sense of frustration felt by the Committee at not having had an opportunity to take part in the formulation of the Platform for Action. She also noted that the chairpersons had discussed the question of cooperation with special rapporteurs. The Committee should explore ways and means of establishing closer cooperation at least with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Another topic covered was the need for concrete proposals for increased participation by United Nations specialized agencies in the work of the human rights treaty bodies. The Chairperson of the Committee proposed that the Committee should consider proposals to that end during its current session.

5. The Chairperson explained that although the Committee had not yet established relations with all the specialized agencies, it had achieved concrete results with those with which it had undertaken cooperation, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

6. The Chairperson also noted recommendation 25 that treaty bodies should fully integrate a gender perspective into their professional and sessional working methods, including identification of issues and preparation of questions for country reviews and general comments and recommendations. This was a big step forward in the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

7. The chairpersons of treaty bodies considered the Secretariat support to treaty bodies and underlined the persistent problems of understaffing of the treaty body secretariats, including that servicing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. They supported the integration of that Committee into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activity through its relocation to the Centre for Human Rights.

8. Referring to General Assembly resolution 49/164 of 23 December 1994 concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the decision taken by the eighth meeting of States parties to the Convention in May 1995, she indicated that two thirds of States parties would have to ratify the amendment proposed by the Committee on meeting time for it.

9. The Chairperson pointed out that the Committee had presented to the Fourth World Conference on Women a comprehensive report containing a serious analysis of its work, the obstacles to the implementation of the Convention and the challenges that would have to be faced in the future (A/CONF.177/77). Since Beijing there had been 11 new ratifications of the Convention. The Committee's role and importance had been reflected fully in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Paragraph 8 of the Declaration placed the Convention on the same level as the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as far as the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women were concerned. In paragraphs 322 and 323 of the Platform for Action, the Committee was described as an essential mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action. The Chairperson indicated that the Platform also underlined the need for women's participation in decision-making bodies by stressing the need for universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, by calling for restraint in the entering of reservations to the Convention and by examining the need for an optional protocol to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

10. The Chairperson concluded that the Platform had recognized the central role of the Convention as a document that was legally binding on Governments, thereby strengthening the role of the Committee itself.

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Addendum

VII. RESULTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

1. The Committee exchanged views on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Committee's role in monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action was discussed, taking into account paragraphs 322 to 325 of the Platform for Action, 1/ in which the Committee was invited to take into account the Platform, within its mandate, when considering the reports submitted by States parties. In the Platform, States parties were invited to include information on measures taken to implement the Platform when reporting on the implementation of the Convention.

2. One expert suggested revising the Committee's guidelines for the preparation of reports of States parties, requesting States parties to indicate measures taken to implement the Platform as well as their additional commitments made in Beijing.

3. To assist the Committee, it was suggested that an analysis of the links between the Platform for Action and the Convention be made by the Secretariat, including an analysis of aspects of the Platform that needed to be looked at from a legal perspective.

4. It was noted that the Committee should avoid a decision that would require countries to prepare written supplements to reports that had already been

submitted. It was proposed to ask States parties to include in their reports submitted beginning September 1996 information on the implementation of the Platform for Action and of their additional commitments. Oral statements should, however, be made in other cases to address the measures taken to implement the Platform for Action and any additional commitments made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and to explain the reservations made, if any.

5. It was noted that the Commission on the Status of Women had the primary mandate for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action. A distinction therefore needed to be made between the monitoring to be carried out by the Commission and that to be undertaken by the Committee on the basis of their different composition, mandates and methods of working, as well as their different outreach to countries and the international community.

6. It was also suggested that the Chairperson of the Committee contact the official designated by the Secretary-General to serve as an adviser on gender issues to discuss the Committee's role in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference.

7. It was further suggested that the Committee might wish to review its earlier general recommendations in the light of the Platform for Action, which might serve as a yardstick. The recommendation on violence against women was cited as an example. Others questioned the validity of the Committee using the Platform for Action as a yardstick, noting that it was a politically negotiated document that had achieved consensus; the Committee, however, was free to go beyond it in examining reports on the basis of the Convention. Previous documents that had gone further than the Platform for Action and were in some cases even more progressive than the Platform could also be used by the Committee in formulating its recommendations.

Notes

1/ See Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

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Addendum

IV. CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 18 OF THE CONVENTION

A. Introduction

1. As its fifteenth session, the Committee considered the reports submitted by eight States parties under Article 18 of the Convention: three combined initial and second reports, one combined initial, second and third report, one second report, one combined second and third report, and two third reports. The Committee also considered one report submitted on an exceptional basis.

2. As decided at its thirteenth session, the Committee prepared concluding comments on each report considered. For the status of the submission of reports by States parties, see annex ___ to the present report.

3. The Committee's concluding comments on the reports of States parties, as prepared respectively by the members of the Committee, and a summary of the introductory presentations by the representatives of the States parties are provided below. The summary records provide more detailed information on the Committee's consideration of reports of the States parties.

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Cyprus

4. The Committee considered the initial and second periodic reports of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/1-2) at its 287th meeting, on 15 January, and at its ___ meeting, on 23 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.287).

5. In his introductory statement the representative of Cyprus reviewed progress achieved in promoting the status of women since the ratification of the Convention in 1985, taking into consideration economic, political and social changes resulting from the occupation of parts of the territory since 1974. Legal and other measures had been adopted and obstacles to implementation of the Convention have been addressed. Since the submission of the report, a new national machinery for women's rights had been set up and legislative changes in a number of areas have occurred, in particular in the areas of family law and labour legislation. Traditional and stereotyped gender ideas constituted an impediment to the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and employment, and influenced educational choices.

6. Programmes and measures had been adopted to assist women to combine family and employment. Emphasis had been given to the expansion and improvement of child-care facilities. Vocational education designed for women had been introduced.

7. Educational programmes had been revised to promote equality between men and women. Programmes for rural women had been introduced to promote their role in agriculture and encourage their participation in decision-making. Women had access to health care and infant mortality had been reduced to low levels. Maternal health care was a priority and information was available on diseases and health hazards for women.

8. The representative reported on the Government's priorities and future plans in implementing the Convention, including strengthening the national machinery for women; vocational training for women and educational and awareness-raising efforts among teachers; expansion of child care; supplementing the recently reformed family law and the remaining legal instruments that involved unequal treatment of women; improvements for rural women; prevention of violence against women; women's participation in decision-making; and possible creation of an equal opportunities commission. He stated, however, that owing to the continuing Turkish occupation of part of the territory, the Government of Cyprus was unable to ensure the enjoyment by women of their rights in the occupied part of the island.

Introduction

9. The Committee welcomed the clear reports presented by Cyprus, which contained detailed information on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in accordance with the Committee's reporting guidelines. It expressed its appreciation, in particular,

for the frank identification of obstacles and problems and of the major policy issues of concern to women in Cyprus. The Committee also welcomed the ongoing efforts, policies and plans to eliminate discrimination against women in Cyprus and the sincere and detailed responses of the representative of the Government of Cyprus to the Committee's questions.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

10. The Committee acknowledged the State party's statement that owing to the occupation of a part of the territory of Cyprus, it could not ensure the application of the Convention in areas not under its jurisdiction.

11. The Committee noted the observation in the report that the most serious obstacles to implementation of the Convention were the social attitudes and practices based on traditional and stereotyped ideas regarding the roles of men and women.

Positive aspects

12. The Committee welcomed the report's assertion that the impact of the ratification of the Convention had been significant and that the Convention had served as a framework for government policy to reduce inequality, had helped to stimulate major changes in policy and had been a useful tool for women's organizations pressing for change.

13. The Committee commended the plans of the Government to implement the Convention in relation to equal pay for work of equal value and to expand child day-care facilities and social security for homemakers, and urged it to explore the proposal of non-governmental organizations to establish an equal opportunities commission to deal with complaints by women and to serve in a mediatory capacity.

14. The Committee welcomed the steps taken by the Government to modernize family law.

15. It commended the steps taken by the Government to subsidize efforts undertaken by enterprises to provide child care. The Committee noted with satisfaction the high level of education attained by women and girls in Cyprus and commended the educational programmes to raise awareness about traditional gender stereotypes, especially among rural women, to address health and sexual health.

16. The Committee welcomed the introduction of legislation in relation to violence against women within the family, giving full protection to the victims and imposing severe penalties upon the perpetrators, clarifying that marital rape is a criminal offence, establishing courtesy services, subsidizing a shelter created by a women's association and facilitating reporting through primary health-care providers.

17. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government to address issues of women's discrimination in and through the electronic media.

18. The Committee welcomed the initiative to support and provide incentives to the establishment of women's agricultural collectives.

Principal areas of concern

19. The Committee noted with great concern the report of international traffic in women and of sexual exploitation of women, including women from other countries, in violation of article 6 of the Convention; it encouraged the Government to persist in its efforts to regulate the employment of foreign artists and entertainers and to prosecute criminal offenders.

20. The Committee also noted the low representation of women in the legislature and in political life, and their absence from higher levels of government. It also pointed to the exclusion of women from the military, contrary to article 7 of the Convention.

21. The Committee expressed its concern about the apparent policy of the Government to restrict women's reproductive choice, through the law on abortion, out of consideration for the low fertility rate.

Suggestions and recommendations

22. The Committee recommends that the Government take immediate action on its commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women to strengthen the national machinery for women, including its administrative structure, budget, human resources and legal powers.

23. The Committee recommends that the Government take steps to rectify legislation that is still discriminatory against women.

24. The Committee strongly recommends that urgent temporary measures be adopted, under article 4 of the Convention, with the aim of substantially increasing the presence of women in all areas of public and political life, as well as actively promoting their position in the senior management of the civil service and in the diplomatic service.

25. The Committee suggests that the Government extend full social security coverage to self-employed rural women and abolish existing discrimination in this respect between married and unmarried women.

26. The Committee urges the Government to explore the issue of equal pay for work of comparable value, to avail itself to existing experience in other countries and to begin campaigns to raise awareness of this issue among the social partners and women's organizations.

27. The Committee urges the Government to take into consideration all recommendations by the Committee in future reports under the Convention.

28. The Committee encourages the Government to initiate the systematic collection of gender-desegregated data in all areas of women's health.

29. The Committee urges the Government to introduce special educational programmes for all law enforcement officials and judges, including judges in family courts, for the purpose of their sensitization to matters of gender.

30. The Committee suggests that the Government of Cyprus take measures, through local and international law enforcement authorities, to combat the sexual exploitation of women in transit and make appropriate revisions of the penal code, as well as provide education, training and support to facilitate the entry of such women into the formal labour market.

31. The Committee encourages the Government of Cyprus to pursue the initiative to enact special legislation addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the work place as quickly as possible.

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3. The Committee's concluding comments on the reports of States parties, as prepared respectively by the members of the Committee, and a summary of the introductory presentations by the representatives of the States parties are provided below. The summary records provide more detailed information on the Committee's consideration of reports of the States parties.

B. Consideration of reports

1. Initial reports

Cyprus

4. The Committee considered the initial and second periodic reports of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/1-2) at its 287th meeting, on 15 January, and at its ___ meeting, on 23 January 1996 (see CEDAW/C/SR.287).

5. In his introductory statement the representative of Cyprus reviewed progress achieved in promoting the status of women since the ratification of the Convention in 1985, taking into consideration economic, political and social changes resulting from the occupation of parts of the territory since 1974. Legal and other measures had been adopted and obstacles to implementation of the Convention have been addressed. Since the submission of the report, a new national machinery for women's rights had been set up and legislative changes in a number of areas have occurred, in particular in the areas of family law and labour legislation. Traditional and stereotyped gender ideas constituted an impediment to the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and employment, and influenced educational choices.

6. Programmes and measures had been adopted to assist women to combine family and employment. Emphasis had been given to the expansion and improvement of child-care facilities. Vocational education designed for women had been introduced.

7. Educational programmes had been revised to promote equality between men and women. Programmes for rural women had been introduced to promote their role in agriculture and encourage their participation in decision-making. Women had access to health care and infant mortality had been reduced to low levels. Maternal health care was a priority and information was available on diseases and health hazards for women.

8. The representative reported on the Government's priorities and future plans in implementing the Convention, including strengthening the national machinery for women; vocational training for women and educational and awareness-raising efforts among teachers; expansion of child care; supplementing the recently reformed family law and the remaining legal instruments that involved unequal treatment of women; improvements for rural women; prevention of violence against women; women's participation in decision-making; and possible creation of an equal opportunities commission. He stated, however, that owing to the continuing Turkish occupation of part of the territory, the Government of Cyprus was unable to ensure the enjoyment by women of their rights in the occupied part of the island.

Introduction

9. The Committee welcomed the high-level representation of the Cyprus Government and the well-drafted reports presented by it, which contained detailed information on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in accordance with the Committee's

reporting guidelines. It expressed its appreciation, in particular, for the frank identification of obstacles and problems and of the major policy issues of concern to women in Cyprus. The Committee also welcomed the ongoing efforts, policies and plans to eliminate discrimination against women in Cyprus and the sincere and detailed responses of the representative of the Government of Cyprus to the Committee's questions.

Factors and difficulties affecting the implementation of the Convention

10. The Committee noted with concern the reservation of the Government as to the exclusion of women from the military.

11. The Committee acknowledged the State party's statement that owing to the occupation of a part of the territory of Cyprus, it could not give any information as to the implementation of the Convention in areas not under its jurisdiction.

12. The Committee noted the observation in the report that the most serious obstacles to implementation of the Convention were social attitudes and practices based on traditional and stereotyped ideas regarding the roles of men and women.

Positive aspects

13. The Committee welcomed the report's assertion that the impact of the ratification of the Convention had been significant: in particular, that the Convention had served as a framework for government policy to reduce inequality, had helped to stimulate major changes in policy and had been a useful tool for women's organizations pressing for change.

14. The Committee commended the efforts of the Government to implement the Convention in relation to equal pay for work of equal value and to expand child day-care facilities and consider social security for homemakers.

15. The Committee welcomed the amendment made by the Government to the Constitution establishing special civil courts as the only courts for family matters.

16. It commended the steps taken by the Government to subsidize measures undertaken by enterprises to provide child care. The Committee noted with satisfaction the high level of education attained by women and girls in Cyprus and appreciated the educational programmes to raise awareness of equality and the elimination of traditional gender stereotypes, especially among rural women, and to address health and sexual health.

17. The Committee welcomed the introduction of legislation on violence against women within the family, in particular clarifying that marital rape is a criminal offense. In addition, the law gives full protection to victims while imposing severe penalties upon the perpetrators, and facilitate the reporting of violence through primary health care providers. The Committee also welcomed the establishment of counselling services and the Government's contribution to support a crisis centre for victims of violence run by a voluntary association.

18. The Committee noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government to address issues of women's discrimination in TV, radio and advertising, including programmes dealing with women's issues, women's participation in broadcasting and the portrayal of women's image.

19. The Committee welcomed the initiative to support and provide incentives to the establishment of women's agricultural cooperatives.

Principal areas of concern

20. The Committee noted with great concern the information on international trafficking of women and of their sexual exploitation, including women from other countries, in violation of article 6 of the Convention.

21. The Committee also noted the low representation of women in the legislature and in political life, and their absence from higher levels of government.

22. The Committee expressed its concern that the Government treats the low fertility rate in Cyprus as a reason for retaining the existing criminal law restrictions on abortion.

Suggestions and recommendations

23. The Committee recommends that the Government take immediate action on its commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women to strengthen the national machinery for women, including its administrative structure, budget, human resources and its executive powers. The Committee further recommended that the national machinery be empowered to formulate policy, and to initiate and review legislative proposals pertaining to the status of women.

24. The Committee urges the Government to take into consideration all general recommendations of the Committee in future reports under the Convention.

25. The Committee recommends that the Government continue its efforts to review and rectify legislation that discriminates against women in light of the Convention. It draws the Government's attention to the Committee's general recommendation No. 19 for amending its penal code regarding violence against women.

26. The Committee urges the Government to explore the proposal of non-governmental organizations to establish an equal opportunities commission to deal with complaints by women and to serve in a mediatory capacity.

27. The Committee strongly recommends that urgent special temporary measures be adopted, under article 4 of the Convention, with the aim of substantially increasing the presence of women in all areas of public and political life, as well as actively promoting their position in the senior management of the civil service and in the diplomatic service.

28. The Committee recommends that the Government take additional measures through local and international law-enforcement authorities to combat the international trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. It encourages the

Government to persist in its efforts to regulate the employment of foreign artists and entertainers, and to prosecute in cases of criminal offenses. The Committee further urges the Government to provide education, training and support to facilitate the entry of migrant women into other occupations in the formal labour market.

29. The Committee urges the Government to explore the issue of equal pay for work of equal value, to avail itself of existing experience in other countries and to begin campaigns to raise awareness of this issue among trade unions, employers' associations and women's organizations.

30. The Committee encourages the Government of Cyprus to pursue the initiative to enact special legislation addressing the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace as quickly as possible.

31. The Committee encourages the Government to generate systematic data disaggregated by sex in all areas, and in particular in health needs and services to assist in policy planning.

32. The Committee exhorts the Government to extend full social security coverage to self-employed rural women and to abolish existing discrimination in this respect between married and unmarried women.

33. The Committee urges the Government to implement special sensitization and training programmes in gender issues for all law enforcement officials and judges, particularly judges in family courts.